

Chapter 4:

Youth Issues

“By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he's wrong.”

Charles Wadsworth

“I am not young enough to know everything.”

Oscar Wilde

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Youth Issues

Did You Know?

- Arrests for theft and assault were the two most common for those under the age of 18 in Greene County from 2001 to 2003.
- The average self-reported age of smoking initiation for Springfield public school students was 13.8 years of age in 1995, and some students surveyed in 2000 and 2002 reported smoking their first cigarette before 8 years of age.
- During the 2002-2003 school year 416 students dropped out of high school in Greene County.
- In Greene County, there were 720 simple assault and 113 aggravated assault arrests of juveniles from 2001 to 2003.
- In 2002, there were 254 juvenile court referrals for drug offenses in Greene County.

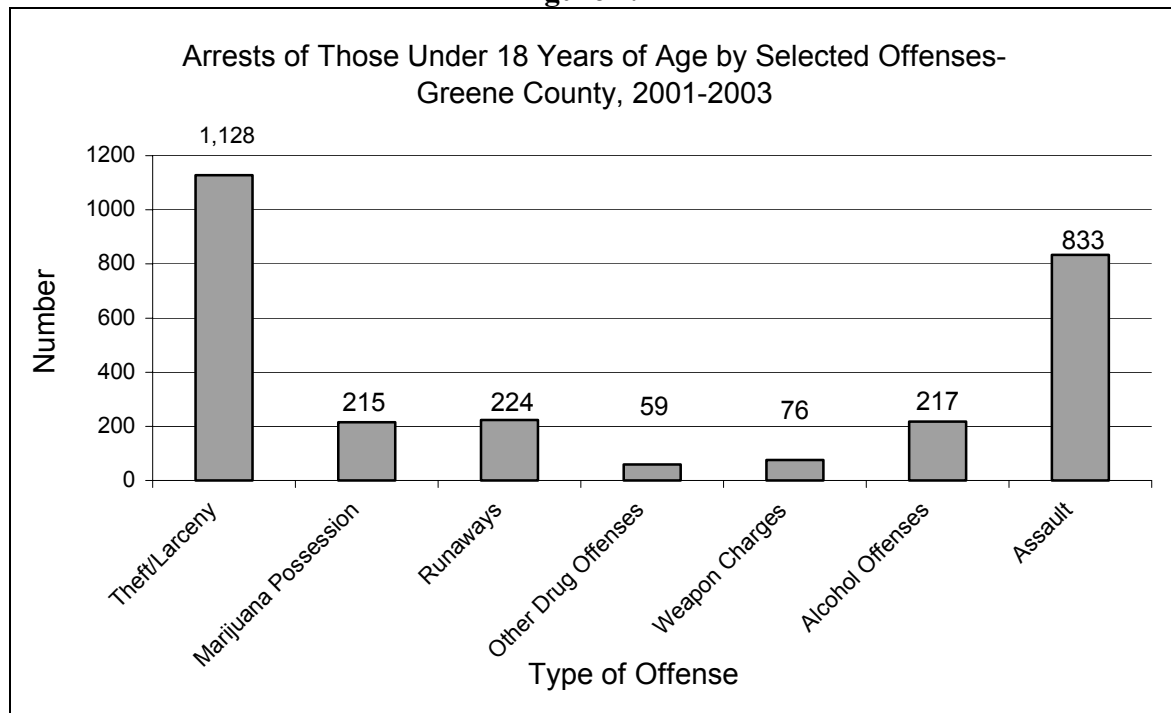
Youth Issues

Youth issues of concern in Greene County encompass many areas including poverty, drug abuse, violence, mental health, and education. The data presented here represents early efforts to construct a compilation of current available data. This process proved to be problematic though. The main difficulty involves the current data collection infrastructure. This infrastructure does not allow for convenient reporting or distribution of data. Also, confidentiality limited the level of access to some information because of the age of the subjects. The information presented in the following charts offers only a brief glimpse of the current situation in Greene County.

Juvenile Law Violations

Figure 4.1 provides a comparison of the number of arrests of juveniles for certain offenses. Although this chart does not include arrests for every offense, this information does constitute the majority of arrests of juveniles in the county. This chart indicates that for the majority of arrests for those less than 18 years of age, juveniles are arrested more often for theft and violent offenses as compared to alcohol and drug offenses.

Figure 4.1

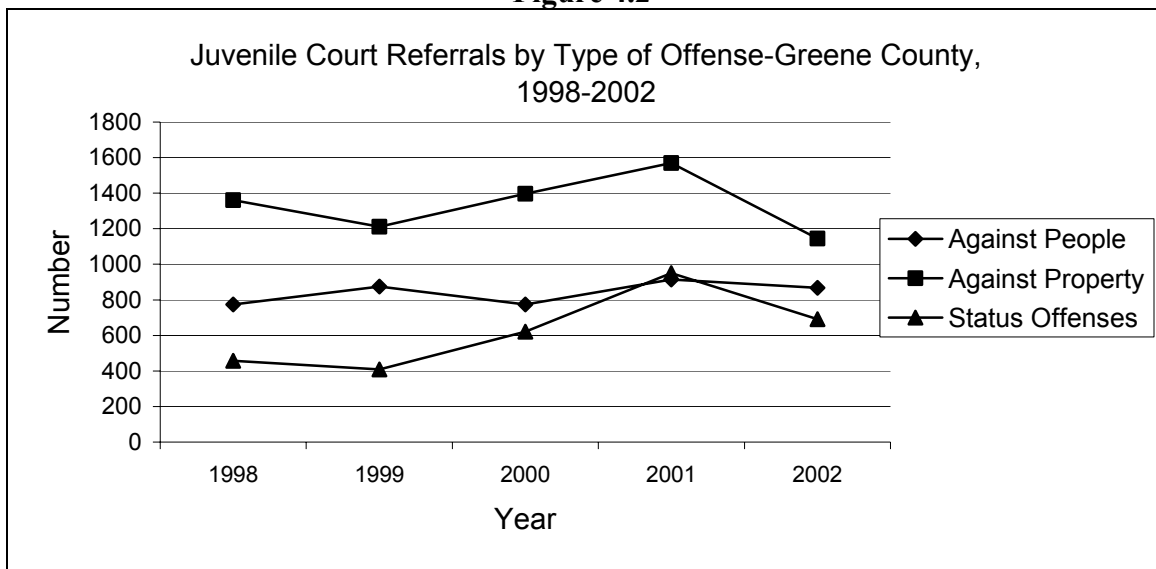


Source: Source: Missouri State Highway Patrol, UCR

Figure 4.2 illustrates the recent trends in juvenile court referrals, with a substantial increase occurring in the number of referrals from 1999 to 2001. Status offenses, such as truancy or running away from home, are only considered violations because of the age of the juvenile.

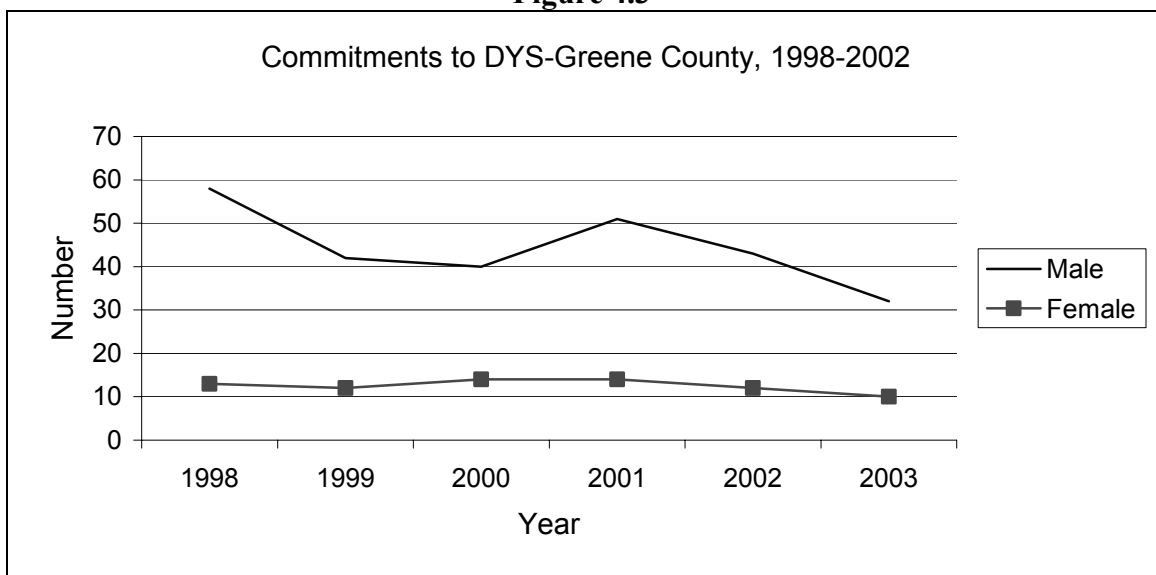
The number of commitments to the Division of Youth Services (DYS) is shown in Figure 4.3. The trends present in this chart indicate that from 2001 to 2003 the number of juveniles committed to DYS decreased.

Figure 4.2



Source: Missouri Department of Social Services

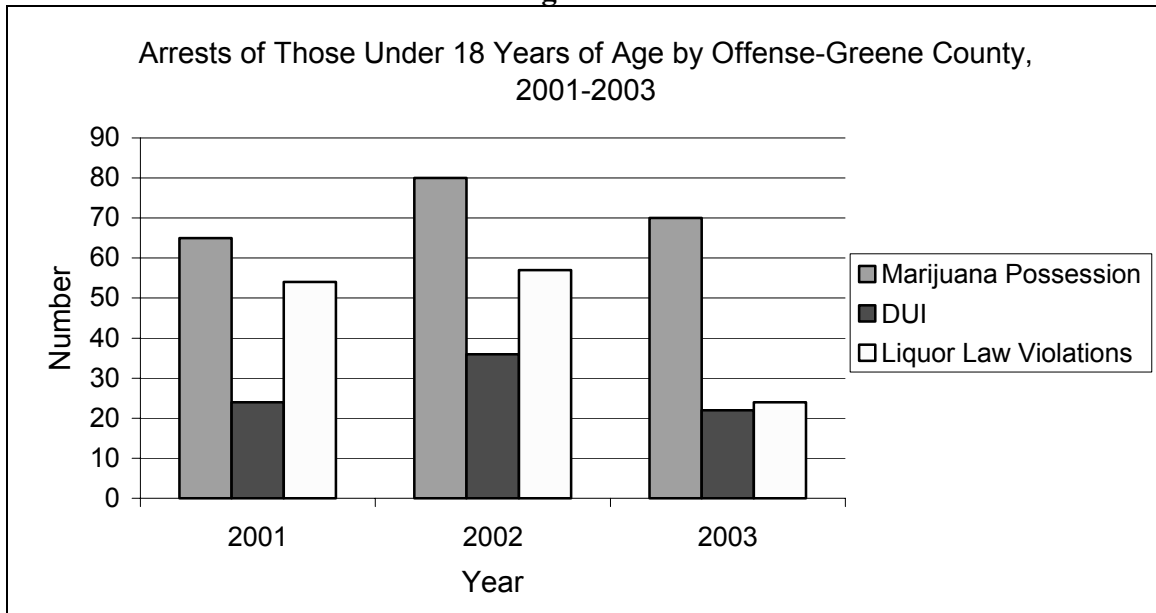
Figure 4.3



Source: Missouri Department of Social Services

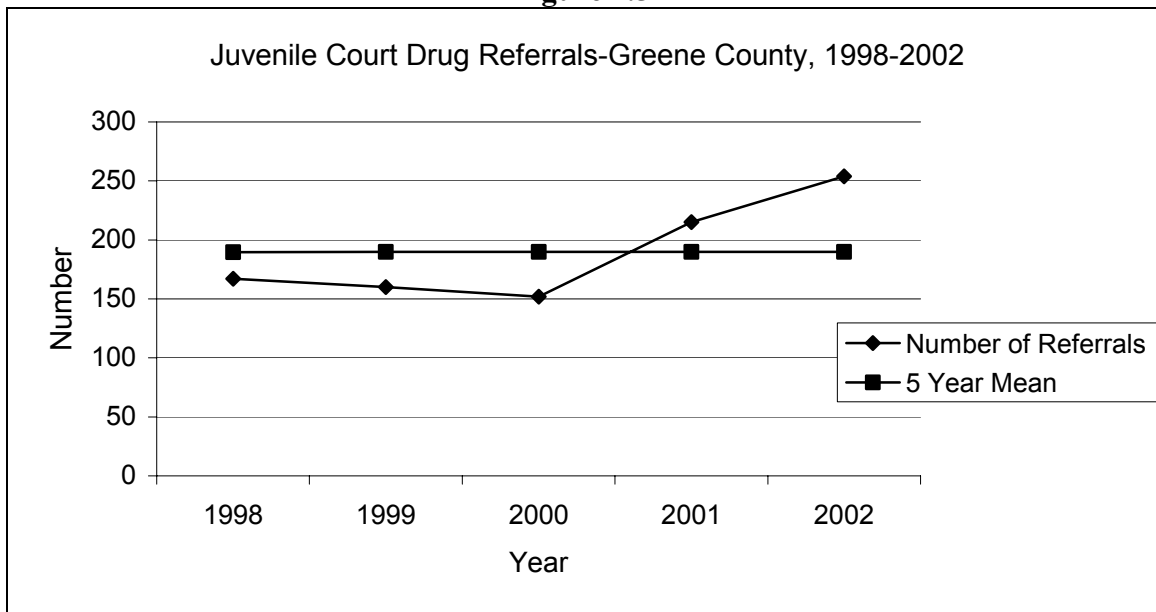
Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show how the numbers of drug and alcohol offenses have varied. The number of juveniles arrested or referred to juvenile courts for drug offenses has been increasing since the year 2000 (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.4



Source: Missouri State Highway Patrol, UCR

Figure 4.5

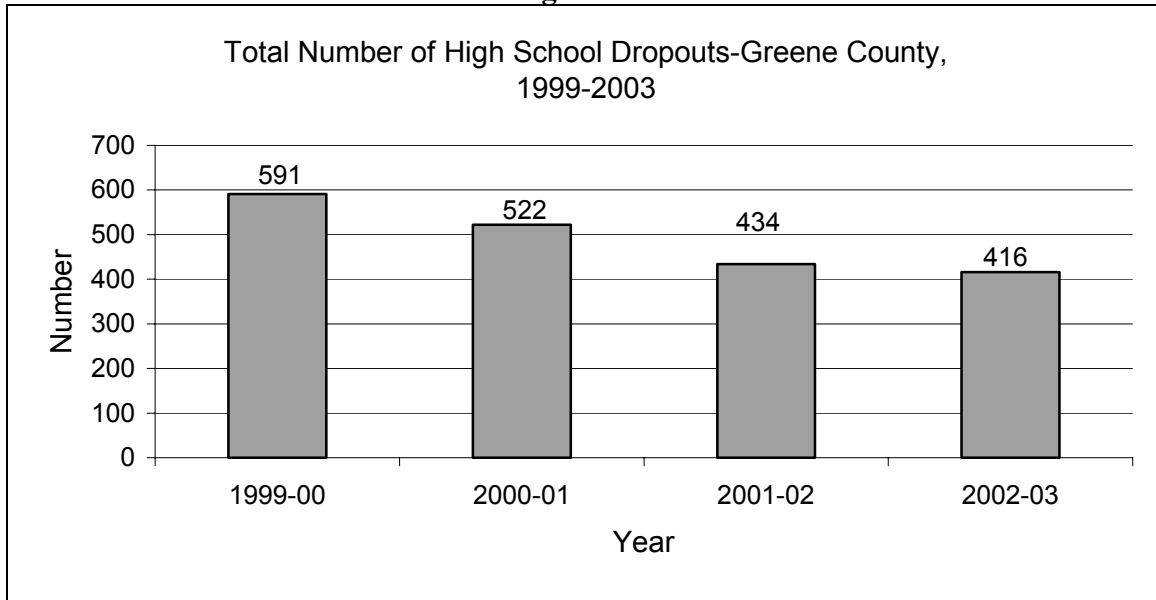


Source: Missouri Department of Social Services

Youth Educational Issues

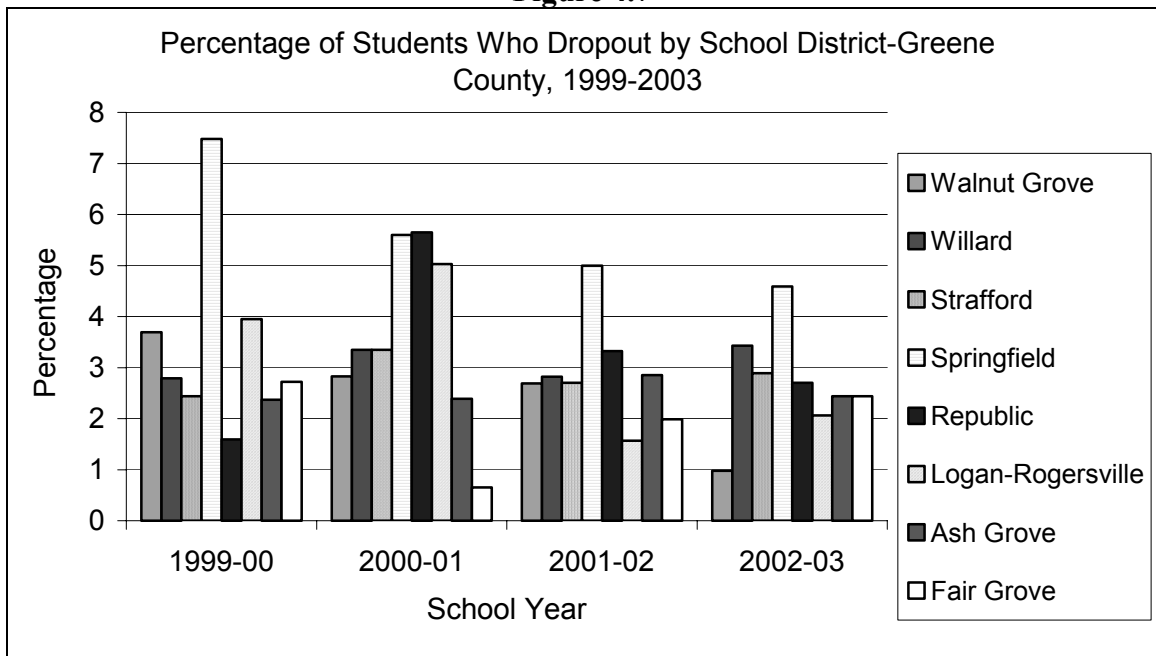
Issues relating to education such as dropouts and disciplinary actions are presented in the following figures. Greene County has seen a decrease in the number of high school dropouts overall (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

Figure 4.6



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

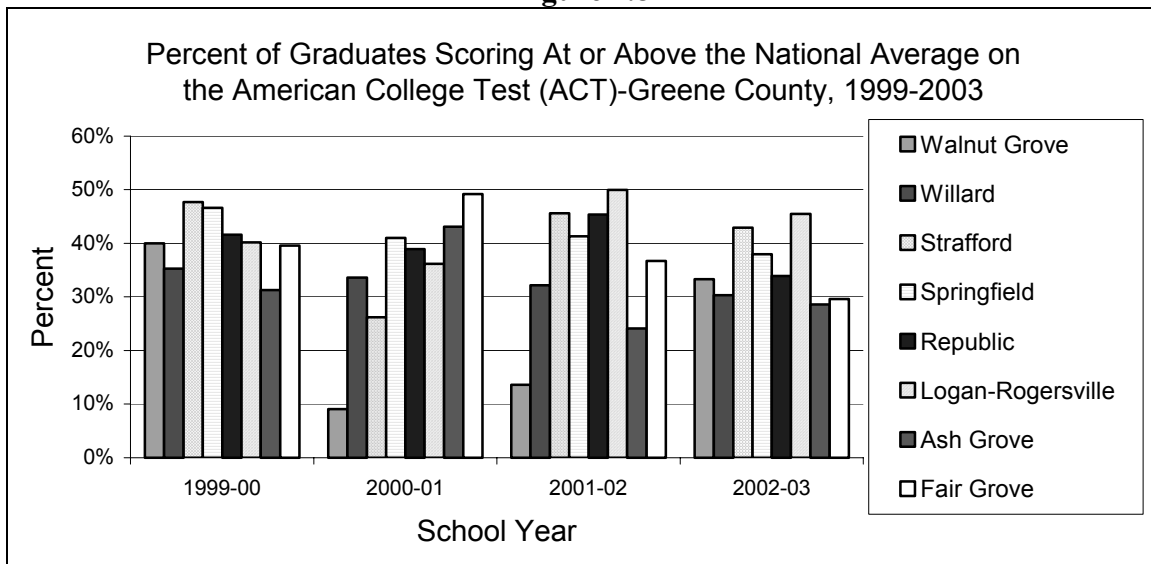
Figure 4.7



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Figure 4.8 offers a comparison of Greene County schools in relation to the number of students who scored at or above the national average for the American Colleges Test (ACT) from 1999 to 2003.

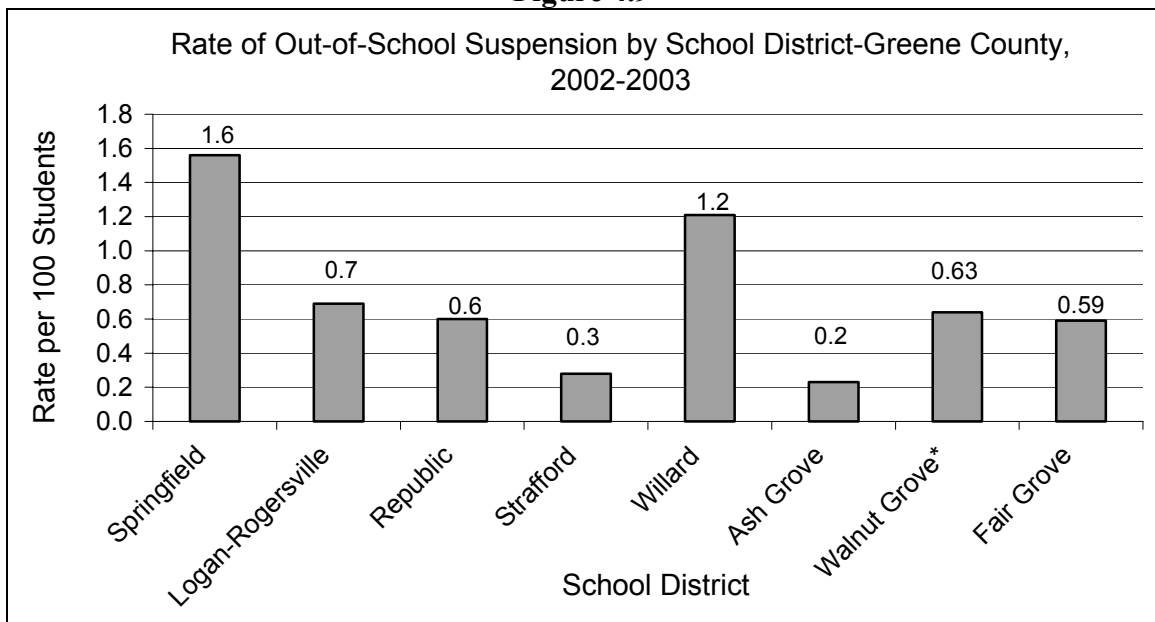
Figure 4.8



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Figure 4.9 indicates the extent of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for county schools during the 2002-2003 school year. The rates of students who were suspended are shown for each school. Springfield had the highest rate of OSS with Willard being the next highest.

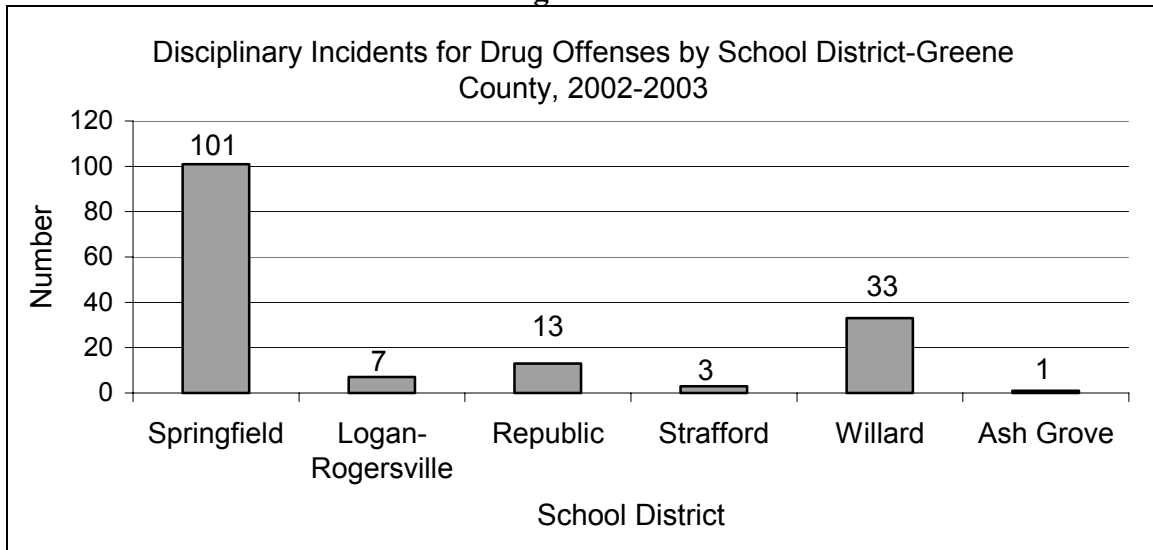
Figure 4.9



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

*The rate for Walnut Grove may be misleadingly high because of low numbers in the calculations

Figure 4.10

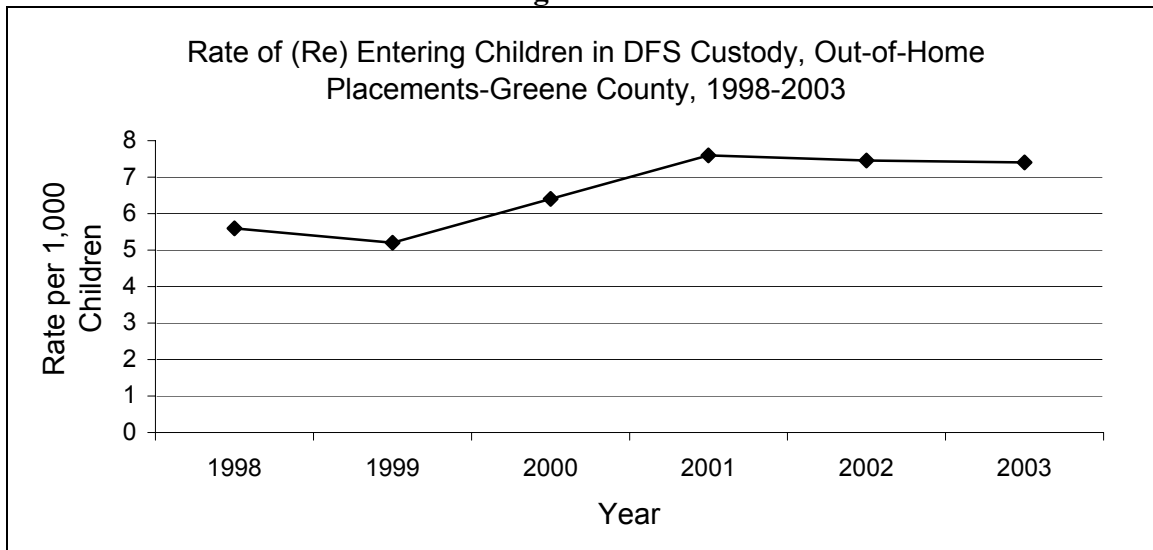


Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Walnut Grove and Fair Grove did not report any drug related incidents

Abuse and Neglect

Abuse and neglect are serious problems facing the children in Greene County as seen by the data presented in the child health section of Chapter 3. However, as the younger children grow and enter the period of adolescence, the impact from early neglect and abuse can result in a variety of behavioral and psychological problems. The current and future impact on Greene County's youth can be seen by reviewing the number of children placed in the care of the Division of Family Services (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11

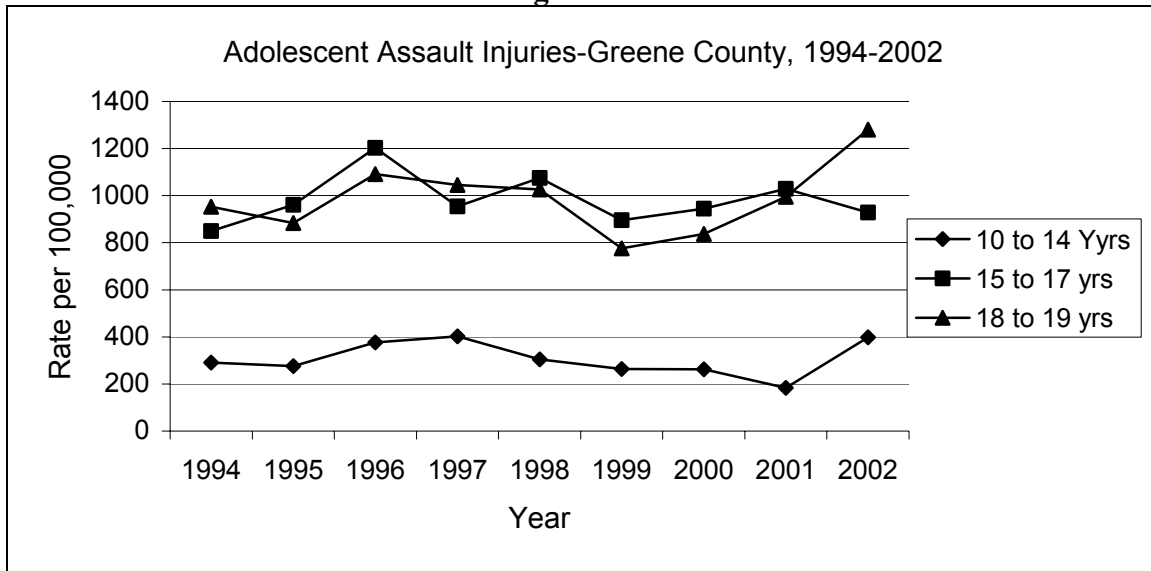


Source: Missouri Division of Social Services

Assault Injuries

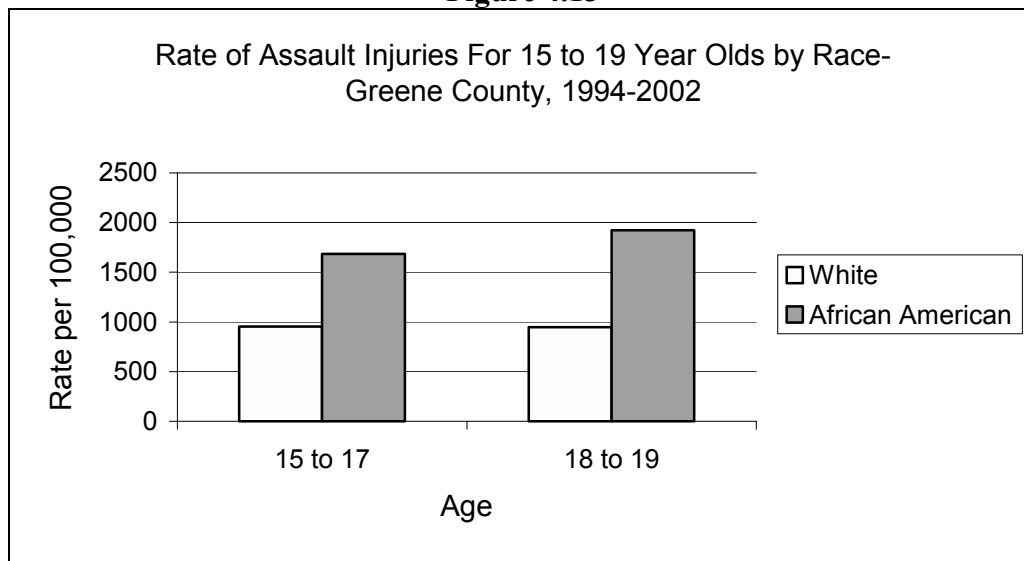
Assault arrests for Greene County made up 32% (833) of the total arrests from 2001 to 2003. This community-wide problem changes the lives of juveniles who are punished by the criminal justice system, those who are injured, and the families involved. The extent of this problem can be seen by reviewing the rates of assault injuries reported in Greene County. The rates of assault injuries for those 19 years of age and under are shown in Figure 4.12. Juveniles between the age ranges of 10 to 14 and 18 to 19 had increases in the rate of assault injuries during 2002.

Figure 4.12



Source: Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

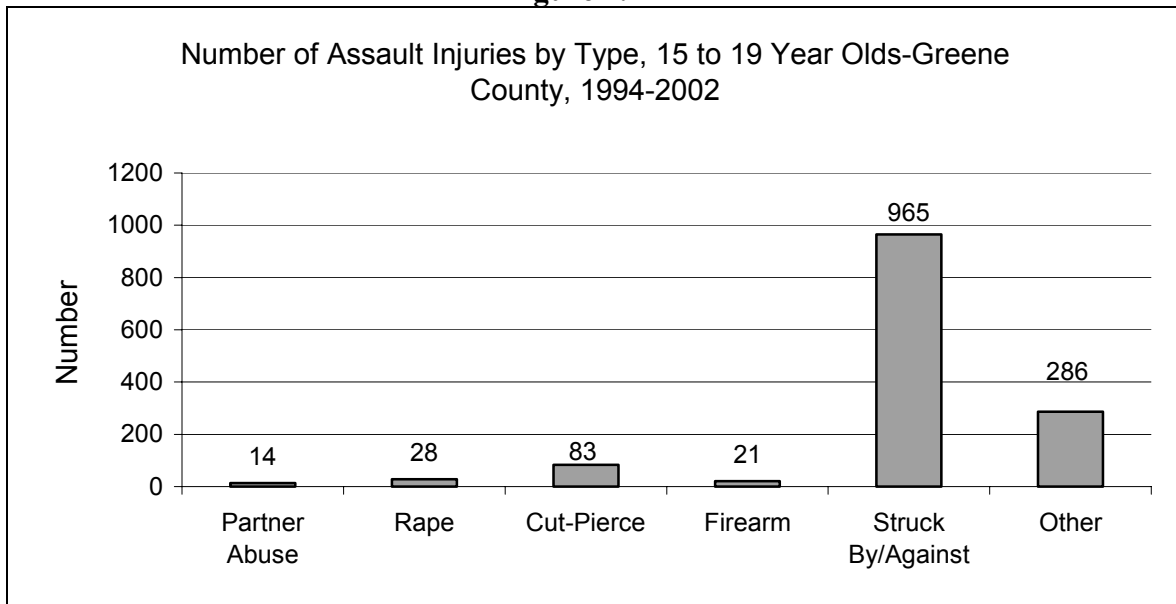
Figure 4.13



Source: Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services; n=1,361

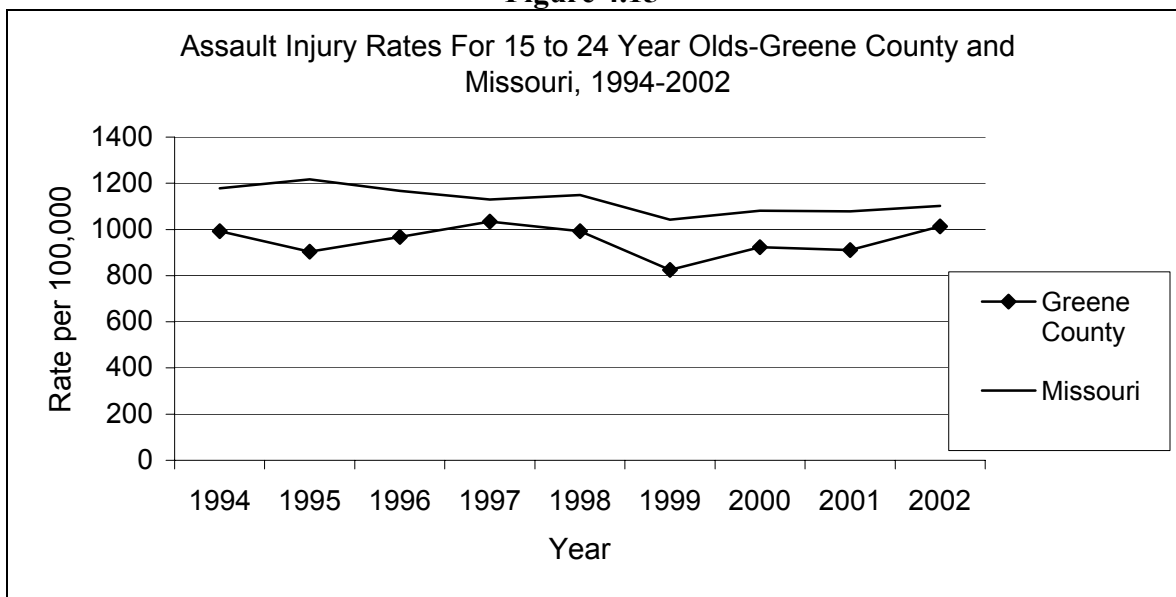
When assault rates are calculated by race and compared, the injury rates among the African American/Black youth are higher (Figure 4.13). The numbers of assault injuries by type for those 15 to 19 years of age in Greene County are illustrated in Figure 4.14. The total number of reported assault injuries for this age group during this time period was 1,430.

Figure 4.14



Source: Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Figure 4.15

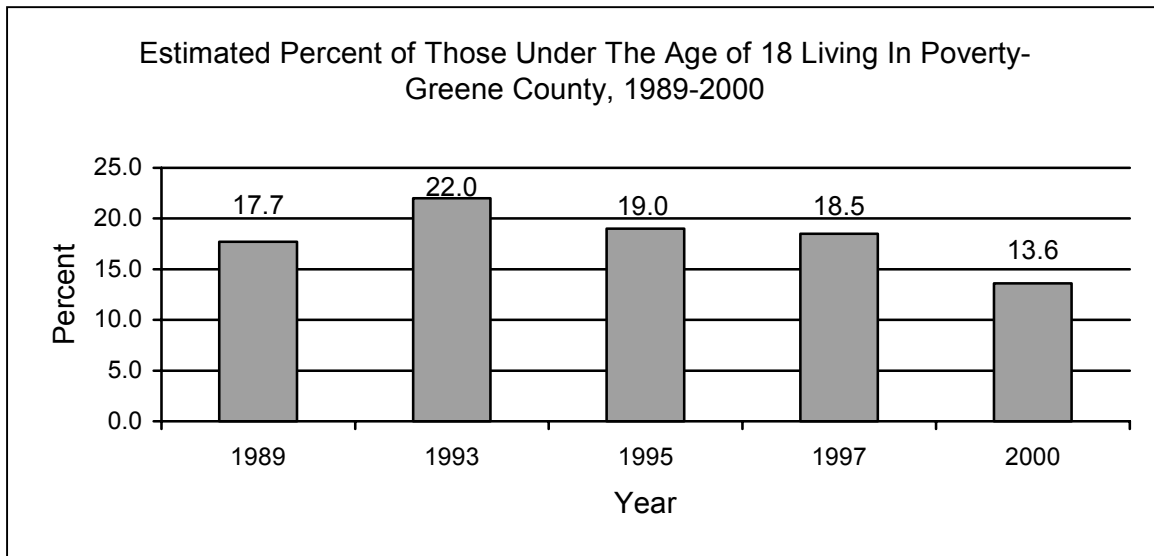


Source: Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Poverty

The estimated number of those younger than 18 years of age living in poverty is shown in Figure 4.16. From 1993, the percent of those living in poverty has decreased from 22.0% to 13.6%.

Figure 4.16



Source: Every Kid Counts

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use continues to be a major health threat for the youth of Greene County. To a great extent, the chronic disease burden that the county will experience in the future will be a result of the current use of tobacco and other lifestyle choices by all residents including teens. In Missouri:

- 30.3% of high school students smoke.
- 18.6% of male high school students use smokeless or spit tobacco.
- 16,300 kids (under age 18) become new daily smokers each year.
- 352,000 kids are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.
- 24 million packs of cigarettes are bought or smoked by kids each year.
- Medicaid pays for \$415 million of annual smoking-related health care costs in Missouri. This equals \$504 per household in Missouri.
- An estimated \$222.3 million is spent on marketing efforts by the tobacco industry annually in Missouri.

(TobaccoFreeKids.org, 2003)

In May of 1995, the Springfield Public School System questioned 1,094 ninth graders to establish baseline data on teen tobacco usage. The survey found that:

- 26.5% of respondents admitted to regular use of tobacco products.
- 21% admitted regular use of cigarettes.
- Of the regular smokers, the average age they began smoking was 13.8 years.

- Of those smokers surveyed, 24% smoked a pack a day or more.
- Of those surveyed, 44% had parents that smoked and 68% had friends that smoked.

More recent data from the Springfield Public School District is shown below. From the 1999-2000 to 2000-2001 school year there was a 19.6% increase in the number of middle school students who were suspended for tobacco use. Of those students surveyed during 2000 and 2002, the reported age of when smoking was first started was between 11 and 14. In all of the surveys, some students indicated that they smoked their first cigarette before 8 years of age.

Table 4.1

Disciplinary Action For Tobacco Use-Springfield Public Schools, 1999-2001			
	1999-2000	2000-2001	Percent Increase
Middle School Students Suspended For Tobacco Incidents	56	67	19.6%

Source: Springfield Public Schools

Table 4.2

Cigarette Use by Surveyed Springfield Public School Students, 2000				
School Grade	Never Smoked Cigarettes (%)	Average Age When First Smoked A Cigarette	Smoke Regularly Now (%)	Very Easy to Get Cigarettes (%)
6 th	71.6	10.5	5.4	15.4
10 th	35.5	12.1	23.4	65.3
12 th	38.1	13.1	13.0	87.9
Total	48.0	12.4	12.9	62.2

Source: Springfield Public Schools; Total Students surveyed: 346

Table 4.3

Cigarette Use by Surveyed Springfield Public School Students, 2002				
School Grade	Never Smoked Cigarettes (%)	Most Frequent Age Range Cited When First Smoked A Cigarette	Ever Smoked Regularly (%)	Used Chewing Tobacco In The Last 30 Days (%)
7 th	83.1	11 - 12	4.4*	1.4
9 th	70.9	13 - 14	11.7	3.7
Total Survey	77.9	11 - 12	7.6	2.4

Source: Springfield Public Schools; Total Students Surveyed: 1,344

*A total of 7.2% of students reported that they smoked regularly when answering another question on the survey

For More Information, Please Refer to These Works Cited and Consulted

Every Kid Counts.

Website: <http://www.oseda.missouri.edu/kidscount/02/>

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Website: <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/schooldata/>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Website: <http://www.dhss.state.mo.us>

Missouri Department of Social Services.

Website: <http://www.dss.mo.gov>

Tobacco Free Kids.

Website: <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>

“Blessed are the young for they shall inherit the national debt.”

Herbert Hoover

“Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies subject to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future and crimes from society.”

Benjamin Franklin

“The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently. “

Friedrich Nietzsche

“Everywhere is walking distance if you have the time. “

Steven Wright

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

Aristotle